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Music from the Court of Frederick the Great

January 17 & 19, 1997

Handel & Haydn Society Orchestra

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1996-97 SEASON

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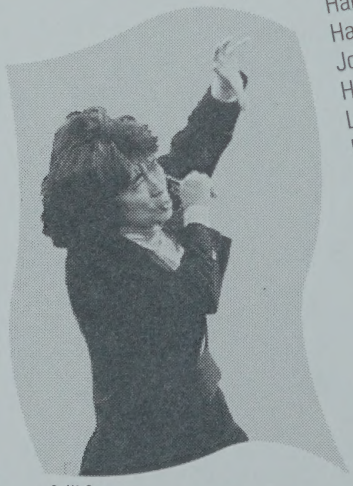

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H&H

Handel & Haydn Society
Christopher Hogwood, Artistic Director
1996–1997 Season

Friday, January 17, 1997 at 8:00 P.M.
Sunday, January 19 at 3:00 p.m.
Symphony Hall, Boston

Christopher Krueger, Director and Flute Soloist

Overture to *Montezuma* [1755] — Carl Heinrich Graun (1703-04–1759)

Flute Concerto No. 3 in C Major [ca. 1750] — Frederick II (1712–1786)
Allegro
Grave
Allegro assai

Sinfonia in E Flat Major [ca. 1748] — Jiři Antonín Benda (1722–1795)
Allegro
Andante
Allegro

Daniel Stepner, violin

—INTERMISSION—

Brandenburg Concerto No. 1 in F Major, BWV 1046 [1717] — Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
(Allegro)
Adagio
Allegro
Menuetto—Trio I—Polonaise—Trio II

Daniel Stepner, violino piccolo
Stephen Hammer, Marc Schachman, and Lani Spahr, oboes
Dennis Godburn, bassoon
R.J. Kelley and Richard Menaul, horns

Flute Concerto in G Major, WQ. 169 [ca. 1755] — Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714–1788)
Allegro di molto
Largo
Presto

Christopher Krueger, Director

A well-known performer on both modern and historical instruments, H&H principal flutist Christopher Krueger has been called "America's foremost exponent of the Baroque flute." He began specializing in historical performance in the 1970s, and has since performed throughout the United States, Europe, and Eastern Europe. Mr. Krueger has been a soloist on the Great Performers Series and Mostly Mozart Festival at Lincoln Center, the Philadelphia Bach, Berlin Bach, and City of London Festivals, Tanglewood, and Ravinia, as well as in France, Belgium, Italy, and Poland. He is a member of the Bach Ensemble and the Aulos Ensemble, and is also principal flutist with Boston Baroque. On modern flute, he has performed with such organizations as the Boston Symphony, Boston Musica Viva, and the Cantata Singers, among numerous others. In addition to serving on the faculties of NEC, Wellesley College, and the Longy School of Music, he has given master classes and lectures throughout the United States and Europe, and teaches at Oberlin's Baroque Performance Institute and the Akadamie für Alte Musik in Brixen/Bressanone, Italy. Christopher Krueger is a graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music.

Handel & Haydn Society

The Handel & Haydn Society is a premier chorus and period orchestra, which has been under the artistic direction of renowned conductor Christopher Hogwood since 1986. H&H is an American leader in historically informed performance, performing music on the instruments and with the styles of the period in which it was composed. Founded in Boston in 1815, H&H is the oldest continuously performing arts organization in the country, with a long tradition of musical excellence. In the nineteenth century, the Society gave the American premieres of several Baroque and Classical works, including Handel's *Messiah* (1818), which H&H has performed every year since 1854, *Samson* (1845), *Solomon* (1855), and *Israel in Egypt* (1859), and Bach's *Mass in B Minor* (1887) and *St. Matthew Passion* (1889). In recent years, H&H has achieved widespread acclaim through recordings on the London Records/L'Oiseau-Lyre label, national broadcasts, and performances across North America. The 1995-96 season featured a production of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* with Mark Morris and the Mark Morris Dance Group. In addition to performances at Boston's Symphony Hall, H&H also offers the critically acclaimed Ensemble Series, previously known as the Chamber Series, with concerts at Jordan Hall at New England Conservatory under the direction of John Finney. H&H's innovative educational program brings the enjoyment and knowledge of classical music to over 6,000 students in 45 schools throughout Massachusetts.

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The Musical Monarch

Robert Mealy

"Never criticize the compositions of a Royal Highness—you never know who may have written them." Brahms's tart remark depends on the fact that composition, unlike, say, watercoloring, takes a lengthy and complex professional training to master the grammar of harmony. In the eighteenth century, such training occasionally did form part of the education of a noble prince, and there were several aristocrats (victims of "Vivaldi fever") who turned out quite passable concertos themselves for domestic consumption in their small courts. Then there was Frederick II (Frederick the Great): one of the most powerful monarchs of the eighteenth century, who virtually invented Prussia as a great power, and so dedicated a music-lover that he devoted his off-hours to practising, composing, and performing on the flute at a remarkably professional level.

As a young prince of sixteen, Frederick had been overwhelmed by the Dresden production of J.A. Hasse's *Cleofide,* one of the great hits of *opera seria.* This three-hour extravaganza was couched in the fashionable *Italianate* musical language now described as *galant*—a style whose transparent textures, clear and simple harmonic language, and elegantly turned melodies came to represent the true art of music for Frederick for the rest of his life. Frederick began to study flute with the great Dresden player Johann Joachim Quantz, and by the time Frederick was twenty-one he had lured away some seventeen musicians to join him at his court. Chief among these were the brothers C.H. and J.G. Graun, the Bohemian violinist Franz (František) Benda, the royal flute teacher Quantz, and the extraordinarily talented second eldest son of Johann Sebastian Bach, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. These players formed the nucleus of a musical family which was to remain together until the King's old age, performing nightly with Frederick; Benda, who studied composition with Frederick under C.H. Graun, estimated that he had performed over fifty thousand concertos with Frederick during his career.

Once Frederick inherited the throne in 1740, he quickly put all his long-conceived plans for the ideal state into effect. Freedom of religion was proclaimed, laws were reformed following the guidance of his many philosophical mentors, and—a long-cherished personal dream—within two months plans had been laid for one of the biggest and most splendid opera houses Europe had ever seen. An exact copy of Knobelsdorff's original building still stands, twice rebuilt, on Unter den Linden in Berlin. Though he was waging a major European war at the time, Frederick managed to have this extraordinary theater built in two years. It opened in 1742 while Frederick was in the field; the first production was *Cesare e Cleopatra,* an *opera seria* by none other than Carl Heinrich Graun, devoutly following the model of Hasse.

Thus was instituted one of the most regimented opera houses in the world. Frederick himself superintended all aspects of every production: he designed the costumes and scenery, sketched out the libretti, demanded rewrites of arias he didn't like, and watched every performance from a seat directly behind the conductor, where he could keep a sharp eye on the score. Each season featured only two operas, one running from November through the end of the year, the other beginning in January and ending just before Ash Wednesday. During the fourteen years the house flourished, some twenty-six of these operas were penned by Graun, who perfectly suited Frederick's *galant* taste. Charles Burney, visiting Berlin in 1772, reported that "Graun's compositions of thirty years ago were elegant and simple, as he was among the first Germans to quit fugue and labored contrivances, and to allow that such a thing as melody existed, which harmony should support, not suffocate." Unfortunately, as Frederick's later Kapellmeister Reichardt noted, a certain ossification in Graun's aria-writing set in after a while, "since the King adhered stubbornly to his own unchanging preferences, [and] could not allow Graun the slightest variety of freedom."

Yet Frederick was not entirely conservative in his tastes. He found the traditional French overture, with its majestic dotted opening and swift fugal section, intolerably old-fashioned, and ordered Graun to add a more modish sinfonia to open the opera. His Overture to *Montezuma* is an excellent example of this modern style, a three-movement work which stands well on its own as a concert piece. Several aspects of this work are typically *Berlinisch,* particularly the spiky and angular themes of the first movement and the slurred "sighing" motifs which dominate the slow movement. This particular opera was a great favorite in Berlin, with one of Graun's most successful libretti; Frederick himself proposed the theme, and wrote the libretto in French prose, which was then translated into Italian verse.

Concert at Sanssouci, Potsdam, with Frederick the Great as flute soloist.

The King was even more personally involved in music-making at home, where performances of flute concertos and sonatas were a regular feature of his court. Frederick was nothing if not organized: two pairs of identical volumes of music for these concerts survive, one marked "pour Potsdam" (his palace of Sanssouci) and the other "pour Charlottenburg" (the "nouveau Palais" in the center of Berlin). One book had several hundred concertos, the other had even more sonatas, all composed either by Quantz or by Frederick himself. This was the court repertoire, played through in order from beginning to end, over and over again.

By all accounts, the King executed these challenging pieces very well indeed. Complaints were voiced about his wayward tempos (when one visitor rapturously remarked "What rhythm!" C.P.E. Bach was heard to mutter "What rhythms...") and occasional problems with breath-control (Quantz, the only person permitted to say "Bravo!" in the King's presence, used his perogative particularly effectively to cover up those moments when Frederick ran out of air in the middle of a difficult passage). But the general verdict was that he was a remarkably accomplished player, especially given his other duties. Burney, a discerning judge, "was much pleased, and even surprised with the neatness of his execution in the allegros, as well as by his expression and feeling in the adagios; in short, his performance surpassed, in many particulars, any thing I had ever heard among *dilettanti* or even professors. His majesty played three long and difficult concertos successively, and all with equal perfection."

As to his compositions, Reichardt, who was inclined to be snide, thought "his style of composition was certainly royal. He wrote out the upper voice in notes, and then indicated with words...[that] here the bass was to proceed in eighth notes, here was a passage for violin alone, here all parts should be in unison, and so on..." Such delegation of labor was not unusual for professional composers (Lully and Handel among them), and parallels the accepted practice of great painters, who expected studio assistants to complete background figures and foliage. In fact, Frederick's productions were wholly professional, and can be faulted only for taking as a model a concerto style that was already conservative when he began his reign. His Flute Concerto No. 3 in C Major, follows exactly the Vivaldian model he had learned from his teacher Quantz, allowing much room for well-considered passagework in the outer movements and with a delicate and affecting melody, which the King no doubt ornamented skilfully, for the middle movement.

Franz Benda, from whom Frederick learned the art of pathetic melody (melody with great emotion), restricted his own compositional forays to solo vehicles—and was in fact paid not to publish his highly idiosyncratic sonatas. His brother Jiři Antonín (or Georg) Benda was the

symphonist, and in one work included a lavish and virtuosic concertato violin part which may well have been intended for his brother. If so, this Sinfonia in E Flat Major would have been written during the eight years that Georg was a part of Frederick's court orchestra, before he moved on to become Kapellmeister at Gotha in 1750. Georg was brought to Berlin by Frederick, along with the rest of his family, after an earlier visit to the freethinking city exposed them to religious persecution in their native Bohemia.

Toward the bottom of Frederick's payroll was the composer whom today we consider the most important. C.P.E. Bach was paid a very modest 300 thalers a year for most of his career at court (by contrast, Quantz and C.H. Graun both received 2,000 thalers a year) until he complained that even his students were better-paid than he was; then he got a raise to 500 thalers. His compositions went unheard at court, being too tonally adventurous for Frederick, and his enormous talents as a keyboard player went completely unremarked by the King. Perhaps Frederick recognized that Bach did not completely share his taste in *galanteries.* Like his father, C.P.E. Bach admired the art of Hasse and the Grauns, but his music takes the gestures of *galant* music—the drumming bass-lines, the elegant, slurred pairs that sigh gracefully—in often violently surprising directions. C.P.E. Bach's Flute Concerto in G Major, Wq. 169, a spectacular solo vehicle, opens with a lengthy ritornello discussing a range of vigorously contrasted ideas at such length that we may well have forgotten this was a flute concerto until the soloist enters. Many of these themes will feature in the soloist's episodes, as well as much virtuosic passagework, but despite C.P.E. Bach's avant-garde sense of melodic gesture his concertos still follow very much the Vivaldian concerto model; thematic transformation or development was not part of his compositional art. After the spacious dimensions of the first movement, the slow movement (in the comparatively remote key of E Minor) concerns itself with far more intense and concentrated harmonies, which are resolved by the great good humor of the last presto, whose theme is tossed back and forth between soloist and orchestra.

The depth and richness of C.P.E. Bach's harmonic writing were a product of the intensive musical training which every son in the Bach household received. His father himself was no stranger to the *galant* style, as his secular cantatas for Dresden nobility reveal; J.S. Bach's own tribute to Frederick following a visit to his court was the Musical Offering, a complex work in a pointedly *non-galant* aesthetic. Bach *pere* had earlier visited the court of Frederick's great-uncle, the Margrave of Brandenburg, where he had called in 1719 while overseeing the purchase of a fine new double-manual harpsichord for Cöthen. J.S. Bach paid eloquent homage to this music-lover by presenting him with six concertos "avec plusieurs instruments" some years later. Though there is no evidence that the Margrave ever bothered to even look through the score of this highly unusual collection, his name has nonetheless become firmly attached to the set, although the concertos are far more a tribute to the rich musical life J.S. Bach enjoyed at the Cöthen court—with many of the musicians who had left Berlin when Frederick's father dismissed his orchestra!

Had the Margrave peeked into his presentation copy, the first thing he would have seen was something that would not have looked like a concerto at all. In fact, this movement exists in another source as an independent sinfonia, which Bach scholars have suggested was the missing opening movement to the "Hunting Cantata," BWV 208, written in 1713. The soloists really appear in the second movement, which opens with a rhapsodic oboe solo. What seems to be glorious improvisation turns out to be something very different, as the violino piccolo takes up this material in close canon with the oboe. This movement ends with one of Bach's most extraordinary harmonic moments, as a cadential formula as old as Corelli is expanded into a series of strangely static, otherworldly chords passed from winds to strings.

In the movement which follows, the violino piccolo finally comes to the fore as a soloist, but, as Bach scholar Michael Marrissen has pointed out, its attempts to take over are continually frustrated. Certainly the writing is highly uncharacteristic of the instrument. Tuned a third higher than the normal violin, the violino piccolo

generally took over awkwardly high violin lines, but here it is restricted to chords in its unresonant middle range. Malcolm Boyd has ingeniously suggested that this movement originated as a cantata movement, and its chordal solo part is based on the original voice parts. Certainly this is how it appears in a much later cantata, BWV 207. Marrisen's reading of this concerto as being a kind of failed attempt for the violino piccolo to be soloist is borne out by the closing series of dances, where curiously the *"poloinesse"* for strings alone is explicitly marked "violino piccolo tacet:" here, as each group of instruments gets its turn to shine, the ostensible soloist is asked to remain silent.

—Scholar and performer Robert Mealy has recorded and toured with many period-instrument ensembles, including the King's Noyse, Les Arts Florissants, Boston Camerata, and the Handel & Haydn Society.

For further reading: Neal Zaslaw, ed. *The Classical Era* (part of the *Man and Music* series), Macmillan, 1989; E.E. Helm, *Music at the Court of Frederick the Great,* University of Oklahoma, 1960; Malcolm Boyd, *Bach Brandenburg Concertos,* Cambridge Musical Handbooks, Cambridge University Press, 1993; Russell Stinson, ed., *Bach Perspectives,* University of Nebraska, 1995.

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Friday, February 14 at 8 p.m. and
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Andrew Parrott, conductor

Mozart: Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro,* K. 492
Violin Concerto in G Major, K. 216
Rossini: Overture to *The Italian Girl in Algiers*
Beethoven: Symphony No. 2 in D, op. 36

BACH: EASTER ORATORIO
Friday, March 21 at 8 p.m. and
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Christopher Hogwood, conductor

Cantata No. 56, *Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen*
Kommt, eilet und laufet, BWV 249, "Easter Oratorio"

SCHUBERT/BRAHMS ANNIVERSARY
Friday, May 2 at 8 p.m. and
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Christopher Hogwood, conductor

Mendelssohn: Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* op. 21
Schubert: Symphony No. 5 in B flat, D. 485
Brahms: Serenade No. 1 in D Major, op. 11

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Quartet in G Minor for Violin, Viola, Cello, and Fortepiano, K. 478
Missa brevis in C, K. 220, "Spatzenmesse"

SCHUBERT/BRAHMS VOCAL ENSEMBLE
Friday, April 11 at 8 p.m.

Schubert: "Mirjams Siegesgesang," D. 942
Brahms: *Liebeslieder,* op. 52

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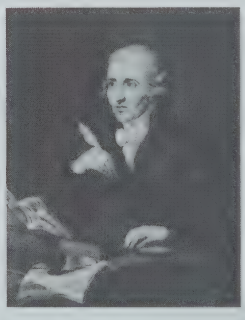

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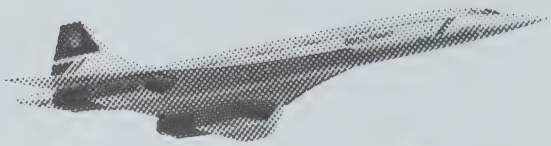

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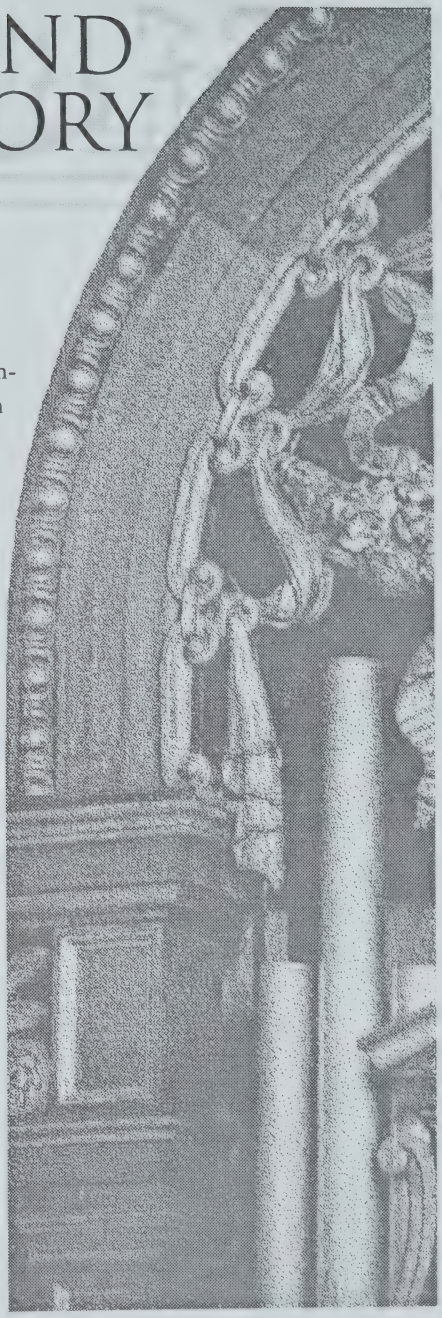

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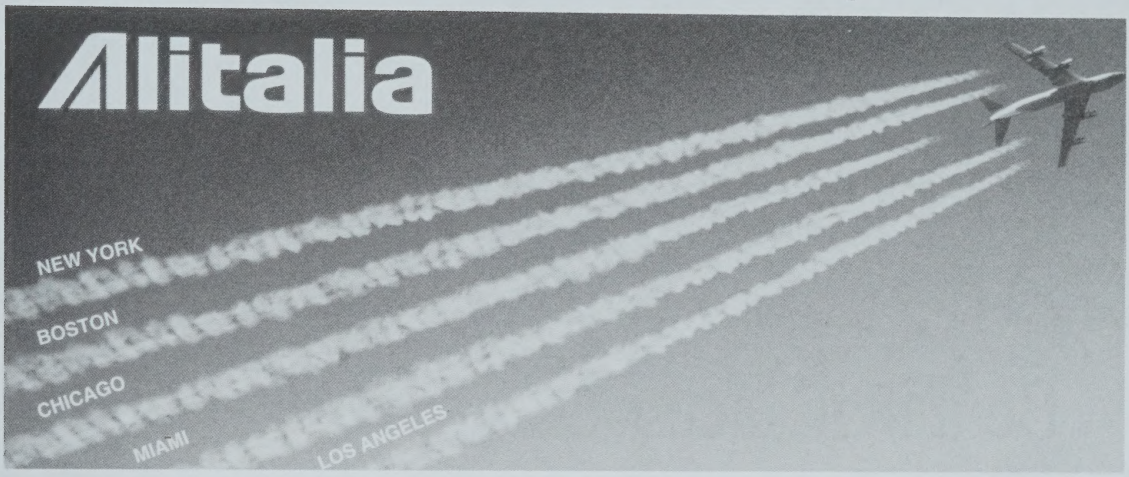

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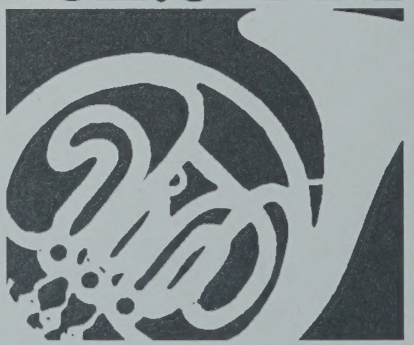

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